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A
SERMON,
PREACHED AT YORK

BEFORE THE
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

AND
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY;

AUGUST 2ND, 1812:

BY JOHN STRACHAN, D. D

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A SERMON.

JEREMIAH 8TH CHAPTER 15 VERSE.

*We looked for peace but no good came, and for a
time of health, and behold trouble.*

OUR Mother Country hath contended with very little respite for upwards of twenty years with the most powerful and implacable enemy that ever threatened her existence as a Nation, while we have enjoyed peace and tranquillity, and received the most solid proofs of her affection, tho' bleeding at every pore. It was not to be reasonably expected that, this tide of prosperity would remain forever, or that we should be exempted from those calamities which are the common lot of humanity. Yet such was our distance from Europe and so difficult was it to anticipate any such collisions with our neighbours as would lead to war, that we flattered ourselves, that notwithstanding the irritations which had been industrially raised between them and Great Britain, friendly relations would still be maintained. We looked for peace because we perceived no causes which could possibly justify a war. We were indeed astonished at the measures taken by the United States to embarrass and destroy the illustrious Nation of which we

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form a part, that Nation which alone prevents universal despotism; but we still cherished the hope, that reason would at length prevail. That the general interests of humanity would teach them to prefer the good of the world to their private advantage, and even to make some sacrifices at a time when every thing dear to the best interests of the human race was evidently at stake. We expected that a Nation fighting for her own existence, resisting the most formidable tyrant that ever lived, and triumphantly arresting his progress, would at length obtain their favour, and that if they had not the magnanimity to assist in the contest, they would at all events abstain from weakening her means of victory and defence. We looked for peace, we persuaded ourselves that the similarity of manners, habits and opinions, the warm connexions which still subsist between the two Nations, the tender recollection that they once stood in the relation of parent and child, would have taught the States moderation, and induced them to excuse any little faults on the part of the British, till a time of tranquillity should arrive, when they might be satisfactorily arranged. — But no good came; the darkness increased. In vain did we look for a time of health, for the tranquillising of those malignant passions which have for many years dictated measures so injurious to our Mother Country. In vain have we expected that interest and humanity, the talents and eloquence, exertions and wealth of by far the most respectable portion

tion of our enemies themselves, would turn the stream of prejudice, and shew to the deluded people, that if we were at any time wrong, it was caused by the incessant hostility of our powerful enemy ; they have not returned to health, they have allowed their passions to triumph, and they have announced that war exists upon our shores. *We looked for a time of health, and behold trouble.*

We know by experience that prosperity does not always continue ; all of us in our private capacity have tasted of the cup of affliction, and many have already experienced the horrors of war ; let it not therefore surprise us, much less fill us with dread, that we are now called upon to defend every thing that is dear to us, and that we shall have to contend with an enemy at our very doors, for we have the most solid motives of consolation, *We have uniformly looked for peace, but no good came, for a time of health, but behold trouble.* Ever since the disputes between our Enemies and our Mother Country began we have wished that they might have a happy termination. We have seen with pleasure, the moderation of Great Britain, her readiness to concede every thing that was consistent with her freedom and independence, and even an anxiety displayed by all her Ministers of every party to remain on friendly terms with America ; but notwithstanding all this, she experienced only renewed insults, and is now proclaimed an open enemy, the great consolation therefore, which will support us during the

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present unhappy times, is the conviction that, on our part, the war is just. To prove the truth of this, there is no necessity for me to examine the reasons alledged by our enemies for the war, but simply to state, that all defensive wars are just. We were at peace, war has been declared against us, we have been invaded and attacked, we are consequently acting on the defensive, that is, we are repelling injury. Now the justice of our cause is of the greatest advantage to us, it is indeed half the victory; a man that is embarked in a good cause has only to contend with exterior difficulty and danger, he may be plunged into calamity, his prosperity may vanish, but he never can be deprived of the approbation of his own conscience; while it approves he can bear with every privation, he may be oppressed by men, but God is with him. But if any were in doubt, concerning the justice of our cause, the best informed of our enemies have publicly declared that it is the most wanton and unprovoked war that ever was made, and proceeds from the most corrupt and shameful motives. Shall we not then defend ourselves with the most sacred confidence. Every gentle method has been tried with our enemy, every reasonable offer of accommodation made and a spirit of conciliation manifested with such perseverance, that even the most timid and moderate have found their patience exhausted. We were spurned and yet we remained tranquil, we sought for peace and they have given us war. That under these circumstances,

aces, we may go forth confidently to battle, may be well inferred, for the God of battles will be with us. And if to the justice of our cause we add the graces of the Christian Soldier, we need not fear the final issue. Numbers avail nothing against the religious and the just, they are in the special keeping of the Almighty, who will dispose of them in the most proper manner.

Let us then see what graces best become the Christian Soldier.

1st, *A Christian Soldier is neither animated against his enemy by hatred nor revenge.*

These malignant passions have no influence on his operations, finding that gentle means have failed in bringing his enemy to reason, he confines himself to such acts of violence as shall bring him back to equitable terms of accommodation. In making war he keeps peace continually in his view, and whatever does not tend to bring it about, he conceives improper to be done. He separates the actions of his enemy from his person, the former he condemns, the latter he still considers worthy of his good will. We know that it has been said that a state of war is inconsistent with Christianity, and on general principles the remark is just, war can never take place between two Nations sincerely Christian, for between such there can be no causes of war, their disputes would all be decided on religious principles from which neither party would chuse to appeal.

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In every war there must be faults on the one side or the other, but were Christianity universally to prevail, in purity the causes would vanish away and all mankind would sit down in harmony and peace, they would feel themselves as they really are, branches of one family, the children of one father. But as religion does not so prevail, and the passions have great power and influence, contentions arise which terminate in acts of violence, and produce wars and feuds between States and individuals. Indeed the very precept, 'love your enemies' presupposes the existence of enemies, and consequently of wars—Yet this precept has been deemed totally irreconcilable with such a state, for it has been triumphantly asked how can you love those whose destruction you desire, and against whom you are fighting. To this the Christian may answer, that he seeks not the destruction of his enemy, but his return to justice and humanity. The end proposed by all wars is peace, and as soon as this can be obtained on equitable terms by the friend of the Gospel, he wars no longer. To love our enemies is indeed a most sublime precept, but it has been frequently misunderstood. The Jews confined their regards and affections entirely to their own Nation, and pursued the rest of mankind with animosity and disdain. This inhuman conduct was reprobated by our blessed Saviour, who was so far from allowing his disciples to despise strangers or to confine their good will to their friends, their kindred or even their country, that

that they were taught to spread it infinitely further and to extend it to their enemies. But in order to ascertain the true meaning of that love which we owe to our enemies, we must observe that the qualities and actions of men are different and often contrary—that they are mild and malignant, good and evil. Now as virtue and vice are as essentially different as light and darkness, the impression which they make upon us, must be equally different. We feel approbation or disapprobation according to the merit or demerit of the actors—vice is odious, virtue is agreeable, we cannot alter their nature, we cannot love them equally, consequently the word love must in this precept have a confined sense, it cannot include that warmth, that holy affection which we feel for our kindred and friends, from the natural interchange of good offices and a knowledge of their virtues; but it means simply that good will or charity which we ought to entertain for all mankind, whatever their deserts or vices may be, and which implies a desire to do them all the good that we are able, consistent with our own safety. The love we bear our friends, kindred, companion and countrymen, includes ardent affection, esteem, approbation, complacency; but in regard of our enemies it means simply good will. We cannot approve of their actions, because they are injurious, but we are not to exclude them from all participation of charity and humanity. The same measure of love is not due to both, neither is it required; but no conduct on the part of enemies can free us from the obligation of

doing them all the good that we can, after they have lost the power of doing us evil. Nor will this prevent us from maintaining our just rights, guarding against injuries, providing for our own safety, and harrassing and punishing our enemy till he be disposed to agree to an equitable peace. Now all this can be done without harbouring hatred or revenge, passions which lead continually to evil, and indeed when duly considered, a malignant enemy who is carried away by his blind passions, is not half so formidable as he who deliberates coolly and proceeds by the dictates of reason. Besides, by depriving our enemies of the power of injuring us, we are so far from hurting them that we do them an essential service; because we prevent them from doing evil: all the measures therefore which do not flow from the malignant passions and which tend to produce peace, are in the highest degree justifiable and satisfactorily accord with the divine precept 'love your enemies.' It may be further observed, that by pursuing an enemy with hatred and revenge, we transform him into a private enemy and consider a man who has never done us any personal injury, and who has done only what he has been commanded, as guilty of his country's faults. But in wars between Nations, the individuals selected for carrying on hostilities, are seldom those who have injured us, and this ought to be an additional motive for us not to put them to needless pain, but to rest content with taking such measures as may successfully resist attacks,

attacks, embarrass their Rulers, and bring them back to a sense of justice. Accordingly, when we have taken any of our enemies and deprived them of the power of doing us an injury, we ought to use them with kindness, they are now incapable of hurting us, and in our treatment of them, we can safely comply with the precept in the Gospel.

In fine, to nourish in our bosoms hatred and revenge, is to punish ourselves in the most dreadful manner, for nothing is more certain than this, that they who harbour passions so malignant, are doubly miserable. In consideration of our own comfort, therefore, as well as to become more formidable to our enemies, we should never cherish the revengeful passions, they are detrimental to the cause and inconsistent with the character of the Christian Soldier.

2d. *The Christian Soldier is firm and courageous.*

That blustering fierceness which frequently passes with the multitude for courage, has no more to do with that magnanimous virtue, than the fierceness of the Tyger. Courage must always include conduct, otherwise it is merely an animal impulse. In order successfully to meet danger, we must comprehend its extent, observe it in every point of view and then consider without any perturbation how to surmount it. Now the Christian Soldier being always ready to die, always prepared for a better world than this, is not much taken up with his personal safety, he is above fear; not that he will omit any necessary precautions, but to him

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life is of inferior importance, engaged in promoting a just cause, in discharging the duties assigned him by his Government to perform, he is neither turned to the right nor to the left, but proceeds with boldness and intrepidity to the execution of his purposes. It is the Christian alone that can possess that steady courage or firmness of mind so essential in war, not merely in the hour of battle, but during the fatigues of a march and the severe privations of a campaign, You will find many capable of exhibiting much courage and energy for a little time; but they soon flag, they get disheartened by delay, they are rendered feeble by the occurrence of small disappointments and petty vexations, they are proof against mighty dangers, but they are vanquished by detail.—Yet more true courage and fortitude may be displayed in situations which attract no regard than on the most brilliant field. On great occasions men are not slack in coming forward, there is a reputation to gain or one to lose, there are thousands of Spectators beholding and applauding them; people therefore at other times the most timid, are seen exhibiting strength and energy of character, but were such persons thrown back into obscurity, were they placed in situations where there are no lookers on, no praise, and where they had to suffer alone they would immediately sink. But the Christian Soldier convinced that he is in the holy keeping of God, feels no despondency, his religion supports and consoles him in those moments when all other comforts fail, and gives
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dignity and solemnity to his last departure, even when surrounded by the most bitter marks of adversity. His courage and fortitude are not to be exhausted in a day, they continue through life, they are not to be dissipated by disappointments, for they rest on principles which events can neither weaken nor destroy.

3d. *The Christian Soldier loves his Country.*

His constant prayers urge him to the acquisition of this excellent virtue. He must every day pray for the happiness of his country, and this certainly implies the purest patriotism, since nothing would be more profane and hypocritical than to offer up such petitions, if we do not present them from the heart. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee.—Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy Palaces, for my brethren and companions sake I will now say Peace be within thee; because of the House of the Lord our God I will seek thy good." The Royal Prophet from the warmth of his expressions supposes that every good man is full of this noble attachment, and ready to pour it out on every proper occasion, and with the greatest reason, for there is no virtue which affords us so many inducements, and it is impossible that a person of worth and integrity can be destitute of it. A love for our Nation when pure and undefiled, is one of the noblest affections of which we are susceptible, and hath acquired the love and admiration of mankind in every age of the world. There are however two classes of men who join in deprecating this virtue.

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1st, Those who say that mankind are governed at bottom only by low and selfish principles. Such persons make a jest and mockery of patriotism, and deride all pretences to this generous passion as delusive and affected. Destitute themselves of the smallest spark of this noble virtue, they think others in the same situation, and knowing the baseness of their own hearts, they conceive that all mankind are so likewise. But profane history furnishes us with many eminent examples of this disinterested passion, and the Scripture numbers still more precious. With what holy warmth and zeal does King David speak of his native land. Our Saviour himself wept over the approaching ruin of Jerusalem. All our feelings and perceptions are in favor of this virtue, every age presents us with examples of its unimpeachable uprightness, and none ridicule it but those who are insensible to morality.

2d. Those who affect to call the love of our country a narrow prejudice, totally inconsistent with the Christian character. How a virtue can be thus inconsistent which our Saviour himself practised, is not very easy to shew. Were patriotism, a determination to support our country in the wrong, an inclination to do evil to promote her advantage as it has sometimes been defined, then might we admit it to be a narrow and illiberal prejudice; but the patriotism for which we plead, is an ardent and fixed disposition to promote our country's good by all the lawful means in our power, to sacrifice life, fortune and every thing that we hold most dear,

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grandisement by the depression of other Nations,
or by doing any thing inconsistent with justice,
piety and virtue ; but to employ faithfully all
our talents in adding somewhat to its happiness.
It is that warm affection which a good man feels
for the happiness of his kindred and friends, ex-
tended to the society of which he is a member.
But it is pretended that we have no precept, no
distinct warrant from holy writ for the cultiva-
tion of patriotism. Does not this Heavenly re-
ligion inculcate and inspire a temper of univer-
sal benevolence and love which unites us to all
men, considers us the children of God, and en-
gaged by the strongest obligations to promote
the great interests of the human race, without
any regard to nation or country, faith or religi-
on so far as we are able, but as we can seldom
do this in an active manner, we are taught by
the same religion to promote the felicity of par-
ticular societies of men and of individuals ac-
cording to the relations in which we stand to-
wards them, and our knowledge of their deserts.

If then a calm and steady love of mankind be
the most noble and worthy principle on which
we can act, surely the next in point of excellence
and merit, is the love of our country. They can
never be separated, he that loves mankind in
general, loves his native land in particular. All
his social propensities and instincts lead directly
to this. The attractions of friendship and all his
domestic affections give it a warmth which uni-
versal benevolence never can acquire. Those
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pretending indifference to their country, or who give the preference to its enemies, are not merely strangers to Christianity and regardless of the example of our blessed Saviour, but they are destitute of all moral sentiment. If we love a bosom friend, a brother or sister, a father or mother better than strangers, is it not equally reasonable for us to prefer our own to foreign nations. Are we to regard those who have injured us more highly than our countrymen. To endeavour to love all nations equally, is the same with endeavouring to love all our acquaintance equally, it dissipates our affections altogether, and ends in the most determined selfishness. Accordingly most of these who have been the firmest advocates for universal to the exclusion of particular benevolence, have been noted for their individual ferocity. They were so much taken up with all mankind that they had no time to be kind and affectionate to their household, seeking the peace of the world, they neglected the wants of their neighbours, and willingly dispensed with the duties of charity under the pretence of acting on a greater scale, and of benefiting all the human race. Patriotism is therefore one of the noblest virtues, not a cool deliberate preference of our native land, but a warm and affectionate zeal, ready to punish these who do it evil.

We have indeed frequently to lament that this exalted affection degenerates into love for a party, which straitens and contracts our minds, and leads us to prefer their views and interests to the public good. And in a free country like this,

this, where differences of opinion concerning public affairs may be sincerely maintained, great danger arises, more especially in such critical times as the present, least a few designing men who are secretly hostile to the best interests of the country, take advantage of any party spirit that may exist to promote their machinations, and induce by their specious pretences the adoption of the most pernicious measures, under the cloak of securing their liberties and maintaining their independence. In order to prevent any thing like this, let us carefully avoid all those questions on which we are known to differ, let us make a joint sacrifice of all the heats and animosities which those differences may have engendered, and since we are all anxious to defend our country against the common enemy by word and deed, let our only contention be, who shall outstrip the other in this race of Glory. And if we are placed in public and conspicuous situations, whether by the confidence of the Government or the voice of the people, let us hasten at this critical moment to strengthen and multiply our means of defence. Environed almost with our enemies, and mixed with doubtful characters and secret Traitors, it is necessary and proper to arm Government with more extensive powers than usual to meet this exigency, and to bury for a time, part of our freedom, as some do their gold, on the approach of an enemy, that it may rise again with redoubled splendour. We pull down without hesitation, parts of a building when on fire to preserve

preserve the remainder, and we do not coldly deliberate and carefully measure the dimensions of the part to be destroyed, because while we are doing this the whole may be lost. Remedies for immediate evils ought not only to be given, but given with dispatch, and what have the faithful and the upright to fear from strengthening the hands of Government, when we are nearly surrounded with, and even harbouring our enemy in our bosoms? certainly nothing. Wicked and seditious persons may fear, and such and only such will oppose them; but the friend of his country, the honest and well intentioned loyalist has nothing to fear, such powers are not directed against him, he will never know that they exist except in the punishment of traitors. The sword of justice, however sharp, is a shield to the just and a terror only to the wicked. No man therefore who is conscientiously determined to defend his King and Country can be opposed to such measures. Think therefore, my friends, when you hear and see lamentations and tears for the supposed prostration of our liberties and the hardships which traitors and persons justly suspected may experience, that you hear and see not merely the charming of serpents and the tears of crocodiles, but the death knell of yourselves, your friends and companions murdered by the very traitors whom such whining impostors endeavour to protect. Is this a time to pity traitors, when we are resisting the most cruel oppression and slavery, a time for measuring with scrupulous nicety the hours and days of

of their confinement, when we are fighting for our hearths, our wives and children, and the happy constitution which we enjoy. May such hollow policy be far from us, and let our patriotism be a consuming flame to the treacherous and the terror of our enemies.

Such, my Brethren, are a few of the graces which ought to adorn the Christian Soldier, we might have mentioned more, but these are sufficient to point out the real dignity and importance of that character. And let no one suppose, that because Scripture and reason equally condemn all wars as judgments and crimes, it becomes unlawful for a Christian to bear arms, for although war itself must be derived from the malignant passions, and is one of the forest calamities with which a land can be visited, the profession of a soldier is no where forbidden or condemned in holy writ, on the contrary, persons so employed are mentioned in the most honorable manner. It was of a Roman Centurian that Christ pronounced the memorable eulogy, 'I have not found such faith, no not in Israel.' It was a Centurian who exclaimed while viewing our Saviour on the cross, 'surely this was the Son of God.' The first Gentile convert received into the Christian Church was a Roman Soldier, nor was his continuing in that profession declared inconsistent with his new religion. In bearing arms therefore in defence of your native land, you are not to suppose that you are transgressing any of your duties as Christians, on the contrary, you are discharging some of the
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most exalted, but it is not to be concealed, that you will be obliged to endure many hardships and to submit to many severe restraints—we shall behold trouble.—You must therefore, above all things, acquire that fortitude which we have mentioned as one of the graces of the Christian Soldier, it will enable you not only to endure the many privations of a military life, but to perform your different duties with alacrity, and to be strictly obedient to your superior officers. Obedience to orders is a duty of the utmost importance, for without steady discipline you cannot be useful. It is indeed troublesome at first for men brought up to civil employments to attend regularly to military duty; but this, or tame submission to the foe, is the only alternative. And it will give us a consolation that our enemy never can enjoy, to reflect that we have not sought the war, but done every thing to avoid it; and that our Parent State granted every condition, till demands were made totally inconsistent with her independence; demands which if complied with, would have in a few years stripped her of those valiant defenders who have exalted her so high among the nations of the earth. But while we do not conceal the many hardships to which we shall be exposed in the prosecution of the war, and which to many of us will be the more severely felt, on account of the private connexions which we have with our enemy, we are confident that they will be much diminished by every one exerting himself to the utmost of his power, and that this is the only

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